



IN TOUCH

Employee Assistance Program and Your Child

Parents often call the APS Healthcare Employee Assistance Program (EAP) with concerns about their children or about parenting. Examples of concerns commonly presented are:

- I feel out of control with my four-year-old.
- The principal says my child is behaving inappropriately, and I should see a counselor.
- My 16-year-old is being sullen and his grades are falling.
- My adolescent/child is defiant and otherwise disrespectful. What should I do?
- How is this move likely to affect my child?
- My child seems very angry since our divorce, and I'm worried.
- I thought things would improve with my child after I remarried, but instead they are worse.
- My teenager seems depressed and withdrawn; she seems to be suffering from low self-esteem.

Often EAP participants want their children to talk with an EAP professional. While there are many times when an EAP professional can be helpful, there are also realistic limitations on what the EAP can offer.

Parent Consultation. Parents sometimes get overwhelmed or confused about a particular situation or stage of development with their child. EAP professionals

can help parents focus on parenting issues and provide feedback, strategies and suggestions. We can also help you locate resources—books, articles, tapes, classes and support groups—to help you increase your knowledge, skill and confidence in parenting.

Facilitated Family Meetings. Issues may come up that seem beyond your ability to fathom or resolve. It can help to have an objective outsider, one with professional training, who can listen, reflect and help with communication, problem clarification and resolution.

Referrals for Psychological Evaluation. Parents sometimes have concerns that a child may be in real difficulty emotionally. You may be concerned about the possibility that a child has ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) or some other learning disability. EAP professionals do not conduct formal psychological, custody or child abuse evaluations or offer expert witness testimony in court. However, after talking with you (and, if appropriate, your child), we can help you determine the best course of action. We can suggest referrals to other professionals who provide the appropriate services. (*Your insurance may or may not cover these services; please check with your insurer regarding your coverage.*)

Individual Child Counseling. It may be useful for a child to talk with an EAP professional individually for brief counseling. An EAP professional can be an

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Helping people lead healthier lives

EAP and Your Child, cont.

important extra adult in a child's life, one who provides a space and time for the child to talk about a specific issue of concern. Having the ear and attention of a professional can help a child come to grips with something that may be bothering him or her.

Remember that the EAP offers short-term consultation, assessment and referral, and the majority of issues can be resolved within the EAP. If longer-term or specialized services are needed, your EAP professional can help you assess the situation and provide a referral to a professional in your community or direct you to a community resource.

"Fix My Child." Parents are often concerned about a problem they are having with a child or may perceive a child as having a problem. Sometimes parents hope that after talking with their child, the EAP professional will miraculously "fix the child." While it can be useful for a child to talk with a professional, it is important to be realistic about expectations.

Children are often good indicators of family climate. They may exhibit symptoms of family distress. If the child is reacting to something going on at home, with parents or with other significant adults in their life, it is best to work with the parents or other adults in question. If, for example, a child has angry outbursts while you are going through a divorce, it may indeed be useful for the child to talk with a counselor about the anger and learn ways to deal with it. It is crucial, however, that parents learn to recognize the cause of the anger and effectively respond to a child's emotions at home. That is where the EAP professional, as a family consultant, comes in so handy. We can help you become more of an ally to your child who is in the often precarious adventure of growing up.

We hope this brief summary is useful and encourage you to contact your EAP professional if you have questions. The EAP is usually the best place to start to address issues.

*by Nancy Seldin, MPH, EdD
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Hee Haw for Health

Lee Berk, PhD, of Loma Linda University, California, may be the foremost researcher on the benefits of laughter. His findings: laughter reduces stress hormones, increases antibodies that fight upper respiratory disease, increases tolerance to pain, and increases heart rate. Humor is essential to mental health because it assists us in connecting with others, shifts the ways in which we think, and replaces distressing emotions with pleasurable feelings. You cannot feel angry, depressed, anxious, guilty, or resentful and experience humor at the same time. Humor changes how we behave, causes us to talk more, and to make eye contact with others. In experiencing humor we touch others more, increase our energy, and, as a result, may perform activities that we might otherwise avoid.

Source: Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor.

Nixing Negativity

Peers can often exert a powerful influence on coworkers and help them turn around a negative attitude. Steps to take:

- 1) Avoid commiserating with employees who spew negativity. This is how it spreads.
- 2) Remind an affected coworker of the consequences of negativity, especially its effects on morale.
- 3) Encourage a coworker affected by negativity to use the EAP to become more proactive in the face of difficult work or personal issues or to better manage a negative attitude.

Negativity is often not based on large unsolvable problems. Instead, it is often a "life isn't fair" reaction to common stresses not otherwise resolved by healthier means.

Incoming! *World Events & Stress*

America at war, terrorism threats, world crisis, and water cooler squabbles about politics. If daily exposure to the evidence of unsettling times is wearing you out, perhaps you need a break. Here are a few suggestions:

- ***Take a vacation from the news.*** Is your television tuned to news shows too much? Is the TV on even when you aren't watching it? Do news alerts cause you to rush back to the TV? Does it feel as though you are addicted to the news? It might be time for a vacation from the news. Try turning it off or watching it less. If critical news happens, you will hear about it another way. If you must have a news update, ask a friend to give you a periodic report.

- ***Create a supportive environment.*** Find time during the day to call your own. Make this a quiet and supportive environment to read a book, participate in a hobby you have postponed starting, meditate, or practice progressive muscle relaxation and breathing exercises. The objective is to find time every day to feel at peace in your immediate surroundings.

- ***Seek new inputs.*** Use the time you have created tuning out the news to start doing things you have been putting off. Exercise, take a short drive, see a movie, eat out, visit with a friend, or visit a library. Do something new that adds to your life.

- ***Use resources.*** Many resources are available to help parents and caregivers support children and thwart the emotional toll that can come from so much uncertainty in the world. The National Association of School Psychologists at www.nasponline.org offers a wide selection of handouts, tips, and guides for adults to help children manage stress and the fear of war, cope with absent parents on active duty in the military, and more. Your EAP professional is available at any time to offer support and resources.

Myth of Multitasking

Research on how well we do more than one thing at the same time, to get more done faster, shows it doesn't work. Not only can multitasking increase stress, it ultimately is less efficient. Evidence indicates memory can be affected from the prolonged presence of adrenaline, which disturbs memory cell production. Are you blanking out in mid-sentence or forgetting what you were going to say?

You might be a "multitasker." When you multitask (e.g., shift between computer programs, talk to people on the phone, and eat a sandwich all at the same time), you lose time and efficiency as your brain does three things: takes time to switch between tasks, shifts to the correct part of your brain needed for the present task, and discards thinking pathways used in the previous task in favor of new thinking pathways needed for the new task.

Source: *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, Vol. 27, Number 4.

Pareto's Principle

Eighty percent of profits come from 20% of customers. Eighty percent of a teacher's time is taken up by 20% of the students. Eighty percent of this, is caused by 20% of that.

The 80/20 Rule, also known as Pareto's Principle, was described by Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), an Italian economist who observed the applicability of the principle in everything from economics to the productivity of beans in his garden.

The 80/20 Rule has enormous meaning for managing your time and your life. This rule says that 80% of your time is spent doing things that aren't as productive as the other 20%. Discover which of your activities are the "vital few" and separate them from "the trivial many." Do this often and you will stay focused, reduce stress, increase productivity, save money, increase profits, help more people, find more solutions and accomplish more goals.

Corrective Interviews

No matter how well you do your job, chances are you will have a corrective interview between you and your supervisor at least once in your work history. Consider these five tips on managing corrective interviews like a champ.

Trust your ability to succeed. Being corrected isn't pleasant, but if you have a successful track record, a corrective interview cannot take that away. Use this knowledge to detach from feelings of dread so you can focus on what management has to say.

Remain calm. Listen and keep notes. You don't have to refute everything you disagree with now. Consider a second appointment to raise concerns or compose a memo to tactfully refute points raised in the meeting. Don't try to take control of the interview away from your supervisor in a fit of emotion.

Accept reality. Corrective interviews are management tools, not disciplinary actions. They happen, and mostly for good reasons. Try to understand management's perspective, even if you disagree.

Don't attack a supervisor for correcting your performance. Don't hesitate to ask for clarification on what you don't understand.

Supervisors don't enjoy corrective interviews. Understanding that your supervisor does not take pleasure in correcting your performance can help you avoid feeling "picked on."

If they're right, they're right. It is possible to leave a corrective interview thanking your supervisor for feedback. Affirm your intent to perform satisfactorily. Add your own suggestions. Cooperation demonstrates professionalism, and it will be remembered. It might also be reflected in your annual performance evaluation.

To speak with an EAP Professional,
please call:

800.765.0770